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ABSTRACT

This document contains two short fictional stories in which children learn to make good decisions about the way they spend their time. The first story concerns a girl who learns to budget her time and complete her homework before doing leisure activities. The second story concerns a boy who had to decide between playing in the soccer league or taking guitar lessons. At the end of each of the two stories, questions are posed to help the reader evaluate the decision making skills of the children in the stories. (NB)

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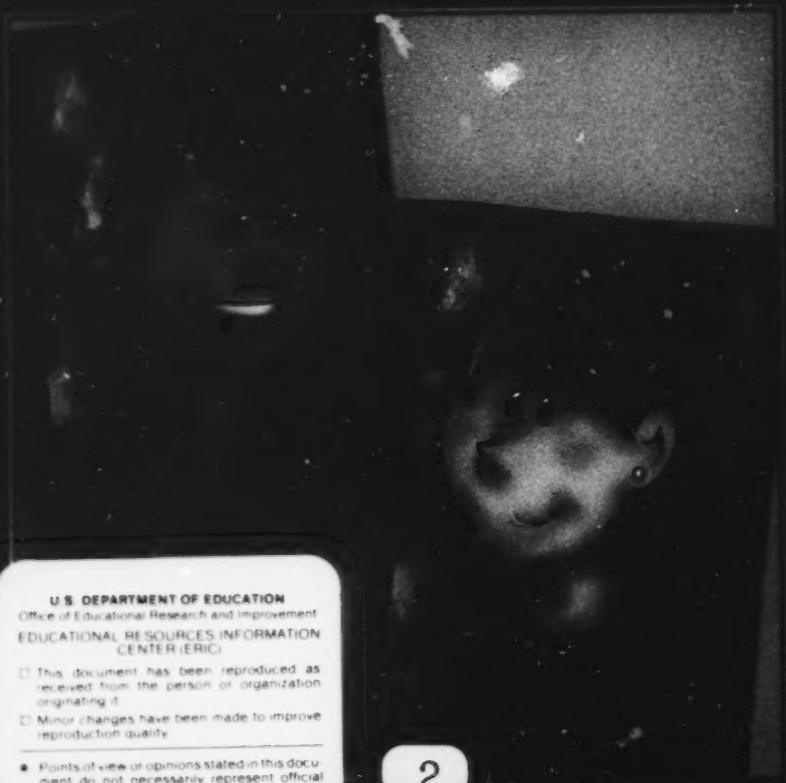
An *Actions for Health* Book

Everyday Decisions

ED 364 806



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ETR ASSOCIATES

CONTEMPORARY HEALTH SERIES

Everyday Decisions

An *Actions for Health* Book

by ETR Associates

ETR ASSOCIATES
Santa Cruz, California
1994

ETR Associates (Education, Training and Research) is a nonprofit organization committed to fostering the health, well-being and cultural diversity of individuals, families, schools and communities. The publishing program of ETR Associates provides books and materials that empower young people and adults with the skills to make positive health choices. We invite health professionals to learn more about our high-quality publishing, training and research programs by contacting us at P.O. Box 1830, Santa Cruz, CA 95061-1830, 1-800-321-4407.

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Introduction

How do you get the things you really want? First, you have to know what you *really* want. That may sound easy, but it is harder than you think. Read about Janna and Ken. They really want some things. How do their everyday decisions help them?

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Janna

Janna was really excited about the concert special that night on TV. The show would have cuts from rock concert videos, including one from her favorite band. She was going over to Samantha's house to watch the concert and spend the night. Janna's and Samantha's parents had agreed to let them stay up late to watch the show even though they had to go to school the next day.

But Janna had to finish her homework before she could go to Samantha's. And she had a lot of homework!

Too Much Homework

To start with, she had to write a report on the natural resources of Brazil. The report had been assigned Monday. Janna had taken a book out of the school library yesterday, but she hadn't read it yet. Then today her math teacher announced that they would have a quiz on long division tomorrow.

Janna planned how she could get her schoolwork done in time. If she went home right after school, she would have three hours before dinner.

She could do the report then. After dinner, she could study for math. The show didn't start until eight, so she should have time. It meant no stopping at the video arcade or the playground after school. But she could do it. She wanted to watch that concert with Samantha.

When school was out, Janna put her books in her backpack and headed home. She was going to start on her report as soon as she got home.

"Hey, Janna, wait up," someone called. She turned to see her friend Leo trying to catch up with her.

"What's up, Leo?" Janna asked.

"Want to play basketball with me and some friends? We're meeting at my house."

"Sorry," Janna said, "but I have to get going on my homework so I can watch that concert special on TV tonight."

"Yeah, I can't wait," Leo said. "But you've got ages to do your homework, Janna. It's only three and the concert isn't until eight. That's five hours! How about a short game?"

"Well, I guess I have time for a short game," Janna said as she looked at her watch. "But only one game."

"Come on, then," Leo said. "Let's go."

Just a Few Distractions

An hour and a half and five games later, Janna headed home to do her homework. She put her pack down on the kitchen table. She was hungry and thirsty. Having a snack wouldn't take long. Besides, how could she study if she was hungry? She poured a glass of juice and made a bowl of popcorn.

When she sat down at the kitchen table, she noticed a new issue of her favorite magazine. She decided to have a quick look while she ate her snack. Then she would get right to work.

After Janna finished her snack it was 5 o'clock. But she still had time. She went to her room with the library book on Brazil and began to read. She took a few notes as she read. Brazil sure had a lot of natural resources!

Janna's mother came home with Janna's younger sister at six. Mom walked into Janna's room.

"Hi, Janna," she said. "How was your day?"

"OK, Mom. How about yours?"

"Long—too many meetings," her mom replied. "How is your report coming?"

"It's coming along," Janna said. "I'm taking notes." She was dreading her mom's response.

"You're only taking notes? What have you been doing this afternoon? You know you have to finish your homework before you can watch the concert tonight."

"I know. I can do it," Janna said. She tried her best to sound positive, but she felt worried.

Janna finished taking notes and began to work on a map of Brazil. She was just finishing when her mom called her to set the table so they could eat. It was almost 6:30.

What was she going to do? She still had to write the report. And she hadn't studied for the math quiz yet. Maybe she could talk her mom into letting her see the concert, anyway, just this once.

Just a Little Late

Janna took the map with her to the kitchen. "Mom, look at this really great map I made," she said.

"You did a neat job."

"Mom, I haven't quite got my report done, but you know how much I really want to see the concert tonight. If you let me see it anyway, I promise I'll finish my report tomorrow night."

"That would mean handing it in late."

"Yeah, but I could ask for an extension."

"You know you have to ask for an extension ahead of time, or it will be late and he will mark you off."

"Well, I could get up early in the morning to finish it. I could set my alarm clock for six."

"Janna, I told you that you could stay up late to watch the show if you finished your homework. I am not going to let you lose even more sleep than that just because you didn't keep your promise. You will be sleepwalking the whole day."

"Mom, come on. Just this once. That concert means a lot to me."

"If it meant so much to you, why didn't you get your work done in time? What were you doing this afternoon?"

"Well, I saw Leo after school...."

"And...."

"And we played a couple games of basketball. Then I came right home and started to work."

"Janna, you made a choice. We agreed that you would finish your report before you could watch the concert. But you decided to play bas-

ketball instead of doing your homework. So that means you can't watch the show."

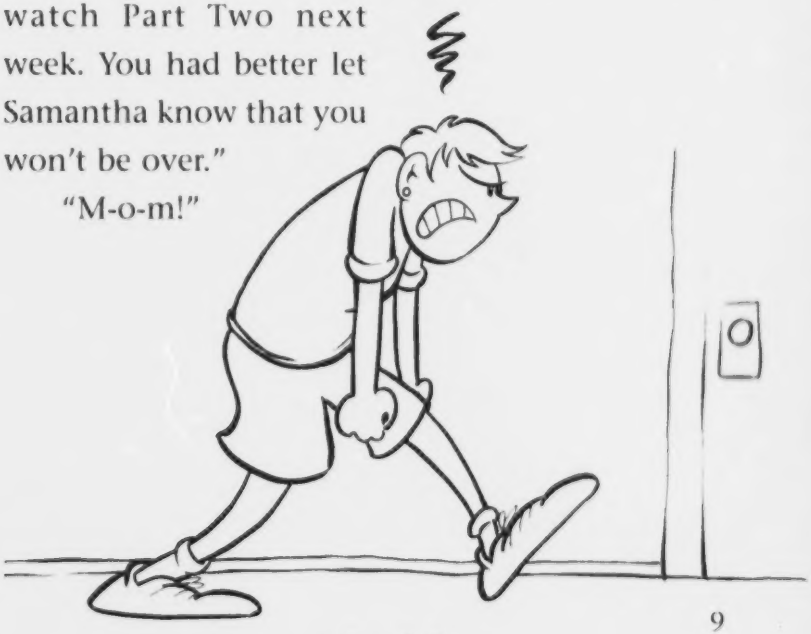
"But I did do my homework...."

"You didn't start until late, and now you haven't finished it. You thought you had time to play basketball, do homework and watch the concert. But you ran out of time."

"But, Mom, I really want to watch that concert. If I can't watch it, I will be so upset I won't get my report done anyway. Just let me this once."

"You know what our agreement was, Janna. Maybe you will get your work done in time to watch Part Two next week. You had better let Samantha know that you won't be over."

"M-o-m!"



One Week Later

The following Wednesday, Janna headed by the park on her way home from school. A few of her friends were shooting hoops.

"Hey, Janna," Leo called. "Come join us. We need someone to even up the teams."

"I can't. I have to do my homework."

"Just play for a while. You can't have that much homework."

"Not today," Janna said. "I want to get my homework done before the concert on TV tonight."

"It's still early. You have time."

"Yeah, that's what I thought last week and I was wrong. Maybe I'll come out and see if you're still here when I finish."

"Suit yourself. Don't work too hard." They all laughed.

Janna passed by the video arcade. She had some quarters jingling in her pocket. Maybe she had time for one quick game. No, she told herself. What are you trying to do—miss the show again?

After a quick snack, Janna started on her homework by 3:30! When her mom and sister walked in at six, she was finishing the last question from her science homework.

"Hi, Janna," her mom said. "How is the homework going today?"

"All done, Mom. I didn't stop to play basketball. I didn't stop at the video arcade. I didn't read any magazines or comics."

"Sounds like there were a lot of temptations."

"Yeah, but today I knew what I wanted to do most—watch the concert."

"Great! Sounds like you learned something last week. After you set the table, you can pack your bag for your night at Samantha's."

Think About It

Did Janna know what she really wanted? How well did she plan the first week? How did planning help her the second week?

Ken

Ken tossed and turned all night. When his alarm went off he felt sleepy and grouchy—not a good way to start the school day. Then he remembered what was bothering him. This week he had to decide about playing in the soccer league or taking guitar lessons. The coach wanted to know by Friday if Ken was going to play.

Tough Choices

Ken thought about his choices as he got ready for school. He wanted to play soccer. But he also wanted to take guitar lessons and have time to jam with Jimmy and Emilio. They might even get a band together. Ken knew he couldn't do both.

His parents had agreed to pay for guitar lessons with a new teacher, but Ken had to promise to practice at least an hour every day. Guitar lessons were expensive, but his parents would find the money if he really wanted to play guitar and would work hard at it. They didn't think he would have enough time and energy to practice guitar and play soccer every afternoon, plus do all his homework and chores.

They could be right. Last year, Ken had usually been too tired to practice guitar after soccer. He really wanted to do both—play soccer and take guitar lessons—but he had to choose.

Music or Soccer?

On the way to school, Ken kept thinking about his decision—soccer or music, soccer or music? Ken wanted to be a musician someday. He used to sit on the couch next to his grandfather and listen to him sing and play.

Papa still played at family get-togethers sometimes, but he wasn't feeling too well these days. Sometimes, Ken would go over and play for him after church on Sundays. Papa, propped up in bed, would listen, smile and show Ken a few things. When they were done, he would always say, "Now, Kenny, you keep playing. You hear me? You have real talent."

As Ken entered the school yard, he saw his friend Lou. "How's it going?" Lou asked.

"It's tough," Ken said. "I can't decide if I should play soccer."

"What do you mean, you can't decide? You have to play. You've always played. You know you love soccer. And it's great exercise! What's to decide?"

"I know. I like to play. I want to play. I know exercise is good for me. But I also want to take guitar lessons. Music is really important to me. And I can't do both."

"Sure, you can. We need you on the team."

"My parents said if they pay for guitar lessons I have to practice every day. I don't have enough time to do both," Ken said.

"You're being too serious," said Lou. "Take it easy. You're a good guitar player. But you have years to play music. Like my uncle says, 'Live for today. There may be no tomorrow.'"

"Lou, don't give me that."

Lou shrugged. "What's your hurry? Play soccer with your buddies."

Another Opinion

Before Ken knew it, it was time for lunch. He saw Jimmy at a table in the corner and went over to sit with him. When they were done eating, Ken asked Jimmy if he could come to the band room.

"What's going on, Ken?" Jimmy asked.

"I've got to talk with you someplace quiet."

"You in some kind of trouble?"

"No. But I have a problem." They opened the band room door and sat down on one of the risers. "I can't decide about something important, and I wanted to see what you think. You usually have good ideas."

"Thanks. What's up?"

"I have to decide between playing soccer and taking guitar lessons."

"How come?"

"I don't have time to do both. My parents say I have to practice at least an hour a day if they pay for guitar lessons."

"That's a hard choice."

"Yeah, I know."

"What do you really want to do?"

"I love to play my guitar, and you know how much fun we have jamming together."

"We could do that even if you played in the soccer league."

"Maybe. But we only started playing together this summer. Now that school has started again, I don't know if we'll be able to keep it up. And if I play soccer, I won't have much time."

"You know," Jimmy said, "Emilio would really like to play with us, too. He got a keyboard for his birthday."

"That would be great. You know I want to get better. I've been playing around on my own for a couple years. Last year, I finally started lessons. I learned a lot, but I didn't practice very much. My teacher and my parents were always after me."

"Wait a second, Ken. I thought this was something you wanted to do. Now it sounds like you're trying to please your parents. Which is it?"

"It's for me, Jimmy. My parents aren't pushing me. But the lessons are expensive. If they pay, I have to do my part and practice. Papa says I have real talent."

"Sounds like you've made up your mind."

"But I'll really miss soccer practice—being with my friends every afternoon and being outside getting exercise."

A Little Advice

Ken stayed to talk to his health teacher after class. "Ms. Mineta, you know how we talked about setting goals?" Ken asked. "It seemed easy when we did it in class, but now I'm trying to make a real decision and it's really bothering me."

"What are you trying to decide?"

"I have to decide between playing in the soccer league and taking guitar lessons. I don't have time to do both. I want to be a musician, and this new teacher is really good. But I also want to play with my friends in the soccer league."

"Your choice seems to be between what would be fun now and what you want to be in the future," Ms. Mineta said. "It's hard to put off what you want to do now for what you want to do later."

"I hadn't thought of it that way. It sure is a hard choice!"

"What would you be giving up if you didn't play soccer?"

"I'd be giving up time with my friends on the team. They'd be disappointed; they don't seem to understand. I'd also lose a chance to exercise and

blow off steam."

"Are there other ways you could see your friends or get exercise?"

"Well, I see my friends at school. And we could get together sometimes after school. I don't know about exercise though."

"What about intramural sports?" Ms. Mineta asked. "The games are held right after school, and the teams only play twice a week. Or the recreation center has a pool and a weight room where you could work out on your own."

"Maybe I could do my music and still get some exercise. I never thought of that. I bet that would be OK with my parents." Ken smiled as he picked up his books. "Thanks a lot Ms. Mineta." His books seemed lighter than before.

Think About It

Did Ken know what he really wanted? How did he go about deciding what he wanted? Do you think he got what he wanted? Why or why not?

What will I do?

Too many choices, too little time! It's not easy to make decisions about what you *really* want. But everyday decisions can help or hurt your long-term goals. See how Janna and Ken plan for the future!

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